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ABSTRACT

Individualized, self-directed correction in elementary level reading instruction becomes a reality when pupils can work independently with materials that provide instruction and practice in the skills in which they are deficient and can check the accuracy of their own answers. Commercially prepared teacher-directed materials can be converted to pupil-directed materials through the provision of simple directions and answer keys; answers may be provided in a variety of ways that ensure that they cannot be seen prematurely. The likelihood of cheating can be minimized if the teacher emphasizes learning rather than grading. Among materials that can be used in an individualized, self-directed program are the following: electronic card readers through which pupils observe a visual presentation, listen to a teacher-recorded audio portion, and record their responses; tape recorders, which can be used in the teaching of sight words; teacher-made reading kits that provide a supply of practice material; and reading games. Reliable diagnostic procedures must be used in planning such a program. (GW)

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MEETING INDIVIDUAL READING NEEDS
(session)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

THROUGH INDIVIDUALIZED, SELF-DIRECTED CORRECTION

CS 004 118

"If only I had the time to give Mary some special help with her short vowel sounds." "John doesn't know how to follow directions and Sue can't find the main idea of a paragraph. When can I manage to give them some individual attention?" If problems like these are troubling you, try individualized self-directed correction.

Individualized, self-directed correction (ISC) becomes a reality when the corrective program is individualized to the degree that each pupil can work independently with materials that provide instruction and follow-up practice in those particular skills and abilities in which he alone is deficient. To experience success and achieve mastery independently, a pupil must have all directions written for him/her on a suitable level of difficulty. Answers to exercises must also be provided. When these criteria are met, a pupil can carry on with little or no teacher supervision.

Usable Materials*

Some commercial material such as the SRA Reading Laboratories can be used to implement a program of individualized, self-directed correction. A number of commercial devices similar to the Language Master also are helpful in implementing such a program.

*An extensive descriptive list of corrective material adapted to specific reading problems from more than 100 publishers can be found in Delwyn G. Schubert and Theodore Torgerson, Improving the Reading Program, 4th ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company, 1976).

Other commercial material of a teacher directed nature can be changed to a pupil directed activity. Providing suitable directions and simple answer keys will do the job. Directions that are difficult must be written on the pupil's independent reading level. Pupils can not work independently with either commercial or teacher-made materials if directions coincide with their instructional or frustration reading levels. Such directions will be confusing and will result in pupils interrupting the teacher to ask for help.

After completing an exercise a pupil must be able to evaluate his work by turning to answers which are designed not to be seen or to be provided prematurely. Some of the ways in which this can be done are as follows:

1. Answers can be written on the backs of exercises.
2. Answers can be written upside down in a space somewhat removed from the questions.
3. Answers can be covered with a flap which the reader can fold back.
4. Answers can be written on a card which is inserted in a library card pocket.
5. Answers can be written on cards which are filed in an answer box.
6. Answers can be written on sheets of acetate which can be placed over exercises when evaluation is desired.

7. Answer spaces consisting of appropriately located holes in sheets of oaktag or paper can be placed over exercises for purposes of evaluation.
8. Answers can be separated from questions by a jigsaw cut so that a fitting together of the pieces is proof of accuracy.
9. Answers can be tape recorded.

Trusting Pupils

Many teachers say, "My youngsters would cheat if I gave them the answers." Undoubtedly, some would cheat. But if the teacher emphasizes learning during practice sessions rather than grading, the likelihood of cheating will be minimized. Even if some cheating does take place, a number of associations will be made and these will result in learning.

Electronic Card Readers

The Audiotronics Tutorette Systems (1), California Card Reader (2), and Language Master (3) employ a great array of material on audiocards that can be used in an individualized, self-directed program. When using these devices the pupil inserts an audiocard that has been selected and assigned by the teacher, observes the visual presentation, listens to the teacher audio portion, and then records his/her response on the student track. The pupil then compares the recorded response with the lesson material on the teacher track. Blank cards are available so that the teacher can record words, phrases, phonemes, etc. that have been giving

difficulty to a particular pupil. While pursuing an individualized program, the pupil can work independently and correct his own errors.

The Tape Recorder

The tape recorder is an extremely helpful device for the teacher who wishes to make individualized, self-directed corrective material. The following is typical of a teacher recording that is designed to assist pupils with initial consonant sounds.

> This is a test to see if you can hear the first sound of a word and the letter it stands for. I shall pronounce two words which begin with the same one. My words are wagon and window. Think of the letter wagon and window begin with. Find that letter in row one and circle it. Pause. You should have circled w. (4)

Ekwall (5) suggests a number of ways in which the tape recorder can be used in teaching sight words through individualized, self-directed correction. Among these are:

1. Provide a list of sentences in which words a student has missaid appear. Tape recorded directions would be as follows: "Read sentence number one. Pause. Now let's check to see if you got it right. It says, 'John and Bill were going to go fishing.' Read it once more to be sure you have it right. Pause. Now read sentence number two..."

2. Provide a list of numbered sight words. Tape recorded directions should be as follows: "I will say number one and then wait two seconds and then say the word by number one. You are to try to say the word before I say it. Be sure to listen each time to see if you got it right. Number one (two second pause) 'at', number two (two second pause) 'go', number three..."

Teacher-Made Reading Kits

Budgetary problems often make the purchase of commercial material difficult. Resourceful teachers can evolve files of materials that are self-directed and self-corrective. These might be based on old copies of children's magazines and newspapers that have been cut up, accompanied by suitable question and answer sheets. Copies of My Weekly Reader can be stored in stiff-paper folders of different colors. For upper grades, articles drawn from old issues of Scope or the Reader's Digest can be treated similarly.

By purchasing two copies of several workbook series, it is possible to make a kit of classified units or skills according to levels of difficulty. Mounting workbook sheets on various colored paper to indicate levels of difficulty will provide a supply of practice material that can help pupils overcome specific skill weaknesses. Answer files consisting of cards matched to exercises can be furnished to make the materials self-corrective. Ekwall (6) suggests placing pages from a student workbook back-to-back with the same pages from the teacher's edition and then laminating both sides. Students who do the exercises can turn them over and check their answers with the teacher's edition.

Reading Games

Reading games that are designed to strengthen specific skills can be made self-directed and self-corrective. Although teachers have experienced varying degrees of success with reading games

there is general agreement that they constitute an excellent way to provide needed practice in a way that motivates pupils. Teachers can turn to a number of sources that provide excellent ideas for this fun way to learning. (7,8,9)

Diagnosis

Any program that involves individualization must be based on sound diagnostic procedures. Prescriptions are not possible unless the teacher knows each child's pattern of strengths and weaknesses. These kinds of information can be gathered through informal and formal testing, conferences, checklists and inventories, cumulative records, and observation.